

who, for one reason or another, are best left in ignorance of the nature of the preparation that they are taking, and Latin—or pseudo-Latin for that matter—is preferable to the alternative of illegibility (also condemned by the author).

In a work as comprehensive as this it is impossible to do more than mention a few of its merits. The section on disorders of the blood in which Sir Stanley Davidson is joined in authorship by Professor H. W. Fullerton is extremely good. As an indication of the changes which are occurring even in this, one of the most recalcitrant of subjects, it is interesting to find that liver extract as a treatment of Addisonian pernicious anaemia is mentioned only to be dismissed as inadvisable and unnecessary. (Liver extract is mentioned only once in the index, for the treatment of sprue.) The sections on heart disease and on psychotherapy in general practice are of exceptional merit and the whole work continues to hold its place as the best textbook on treatment for general use.

The publishers deserve a word of praise for the general format of the volume. It is stoutly bound and yet light to handle and easy to read.

**The Family Life of Old People: An enquiry in East London:** PETER TOWNSEND. Foreword by J. H. Sheldon. London. Routledge & Kegan Paul. pp. xvi + 284. Price 30/-.

It is significant that this book has been sent for review to a medical journal. It is sociology, not medicine; but the publishers thought it our concern, and they are right. Sociology contributes as much to general practice as does endocrinology.

If an example is needed, the family doctor frequently finds himself deciding whether he ought to advise a man to retire. This book shows that, in Bethnal Green, retirement is “a social disaster.”

It is relevant to us in other ways too: “The plain fact is that nearly all old people prefer to be looked after by members of their families even when seriously ill,” p. 202. “The family has the care of a far larger number of the infirm, aged and chronic sick than all our hospitals, welfare homes and domiciliary services put together,” p. 194. It is important that these statements are made by an observer who is clearly unbiased on the basis of facts which are set out in detail. For this is a source-book about a field study.

But because we are doctors we must not imagine we are necessarily good sociologists. One of the most important conclusions of the book is *against* an opinion which we frequently express: “Widespread fears of the breakdown of family loyalties and of married children’s negligence seem to have no general basis in fact. Doctors, social workers and others who express such fears may sometimes forget they are in danger of generalizing from an extremely atypical

subsection of the population or from a few extreme examples known personally to them." p. 202.

This is not the only optimistic deduction made by the author. He not only demonstrates that in East London family ties embrace grandparents as firmly as they ever did, but also that there is a practical reason for this. He shows how great and active a contribution the grandparents make in return for the help they receive. They are by no means just dependent relatives.

Although this is a source-book it is full of humanity, in both senses of the word. It is not to be read without effort, but this the author realizes; he wonders in a wistful and engaging way whether there are readers of enough stamina to study this and its companion volume.

**Handbook of Treatment of Acute Poisoning.** E. H. BENSLEY, M.B.E., B.A., M.D., F.A.C.P. and G. E. JORON, B.A., M.D., C.M., F.A.C.P. Second edition. E. & S. Livingstone Ltd., Edinburgh and London, 1958. pp. xii and 212. Price 15s.

This excellent book is intended to help the practitioner who is faced with the emergency of acute poisoning in any of the commoner forms. The first section sets forth in clear, readable English the general principles of treatment, and outlines methods. A second section deals with individual poisons, and the text is so arranged that the important points stand out. Just enough explanatory material is included to lend significance to the instructions given.

An appendix deals with the composition of an emergency poison kit and with the collection of samples for analysis. A short "bibliography" completes the work.

In the section on barbiturate poisoning, the authors appear to favour picrotoxin, though they describe bemegride also. Not all clinicians are agreed on this. But changing fashions apart, the work is modern and reliable, and is confidently recommended as exceptional value for money. The letterpress and binding are a credit to the publishers.

**Having a Baby.** J. F. ROBINSON, M.B., CH.B. Second Edition, 1958. London. E. & S. Livingstone Ltd., pp. viii + 100. Price 6/6.

This excellent little book gives much useful advice and information to the young woman, married or about to be married. The facts are stated in simple language which can be understood by the majority, though here and there words are used which might be found difficult by some readers—such as contraception, endometrium, cilia, nuclei.

It would have been better if Chapter 4, on sterility and artificial insemination had been put at the end of the book, possibly as an